

ON INTRODUCING THE FAIR WAGES FOR HURRICANE VICTIMS ACT

HON. GEORGE MILLER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 14, 2005

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing the Fair Wages for Hurricane Victims Act. This legislation reverses the unconscionable proclamation by the President last week to suspend Davis-Bacon prevailing wage protections for workers in certain areas affected by Hurricane Katrina.

The Davis-Bacon Act requires that Federal contractors pay their workers at least the prevailing wage—simply the wage that is typical for their kind of job in their community. The prevailing wage requirement ensures that the Federal Government does not drive down workers' wages when it spends taxpayer dollars. The President's suspension of the Act is the wrong policy in the wrong place at the wrong time. Many of the workers subjected to these wage cuts have lost everything—their homes, their property, their jobs, and even family members. The best way to help them rebuild—not just the Gulf Coast but their lives—is to provide them with a decent job at a fair wage. America owes it to the victims of Hurricane Katrina that they can play a role in cleaning up and rebuilding their devastated communities at a wage that will allow them and their families to get back on their feet.

Suspending the Davis-Bacon Act, however, means that Federal contractors receiving tens of billions of taxpayer dollars can pay their workers whatever wage they can get away with. Lower pay not only means unnecessary further hardship for working families, it means less quality work for taxpayer dollars. It means bigger profits for big contractors at the expense of working families. It means less money being pumped into the local economy, as local workers have less money to spend. As a New York Times editorial, which I attach to this statement for the record, succinctly put it, the President's suspension of the Davis-Bacon Act is "a shameful proclamation."

The Fair Wages for Hurricane Victims Act will restore Davis-Bacon prevailing wage protections to the workers who have lost so much. The victims of Katrina are not a source of cheap labor for big contractors looking for big profits. They are American workers whose hard work and commitment to rebuilding must not be undervalued.

I urge the President to rescind his executive order on Davis-Bacon, and in lieu of his taking such action I strongly urge my colleagues to support my bill and I urge its speedy passage.

[From the New York Times, Sept. 10, 2005]

A SHAMEFUL PROCLAMATION

On Thursday, President Bush issued a proclamation suspending the law that requires employers to pay the locally prevailing wage to construction workers on federally financed projects. The suspension applies to parts of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida.

By any standard of human decency, condemning many already poor and now bereft people to subpar wages—thus perpetuating their poverty—is unacceptable. It is also bad for the economy. Without the law, called the Davis-Bacon Act, contractors will be able to pay less, but they'll also get less, as lower wages invariably mean lower productivity.

The ostensible rationale for suspending the law is to reduce taxpayers' costs. Does Mr. Bush really believe it is the will of the American people to deny the prevailing wage to construction workers in New Orleans, Biloxi and other hard-hit areas? Besides, the proclamation doesn't require contractors to pass on the savings they will get by cutting wages from current low levels. Around New Orleans, the prevailing hourly wage for a truck driver working on a levee is \$9.04; for an electrician, it's \$14.30.

Republicans have long been trying to repeal the prevailing wage law on the grounds that the regulations are expensive and bureaucratic; weakening it was even part of the Republican Party platform in 1996 and 2000. Now, in a time of searing need, the party wants to achieve by fiat what it couldn't achieve through the normal democratic process.

In a letter this week to Mr. Bush urging him to suspend the law, 35 Republican representatives noted approvingly that Presidents Franklin Roosevelt, Richard Nixon and the elder George Bush had all suspended the law during "emergencies." For the record, Mr. Roosevelt suspended it for two weeks in 1934, to make time to clear up contradictions between it and another law. Mr. Nixon suspended it for six weeks in 1971 as part of his misbegotten attempt to control spiraling inflation. And Mr. Bush did so after Hurricane Andrew in 1992, two weeks before he was defeated by Bill Clinton, who quickly reinstated it after assuming the presidency.

If Mr. Bush does not rescind his proclamation voluntarily, Congress should pass a law forcing him to do so.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. MAJOR R. OWENS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 14, 2005

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, I was absent on Tuesday September 13, 2005 due to a unavoidable circumstances in my Congressional District. Had I been present, I would have voted: "Yea" to S. Con Res. 26—Honoring and memorializing the passengers and crew of United Airlines Flight 93; "Yea" to H.R. 3649—the Sportfishing and Recreational Boating Safety Amendments Act and "Yea" to S. 276—the Wind Cave National Park Boundary Revision Act.

MARSHALL UNIVERSITY'S FUND-RAISING EFFORTS FOR HURRICANE KATRINA RELIEF

HON. NICK J. RAHALL, II

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 14, 2005

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Speaker, this past weekend, the overwhelming generosity of West Virginians, in the wake of the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina continued on the campus of Marshall University in Huntington, West Virginia. As part of a fundraising effort spearheaded by various campus organizations and coordinated with the American Red Cross, fans attending the Marshall-Kansas State football game were asked to "Bring a Buck", just one dollar, to aid the victims of Hurricane Katrina.

From the crowd of nearly 37,000 fans, a volunteer army of students, faculty and staff were able to raise more than \$520,000 in just a matter of hours. This volunteer force of over 150 individuals, including Marshall President Stephen J. Kopp, spread out around the stadium with members of the local Red Cross chapter to accept donations as fans arrived at the game.

Thanks must be given to the many student organizations who volunteered their time and efforts to make this happen. Groups participating in the "Bring a Buck" event were: Student Government Association; Biology Club; Delta Sigma Theta, Student Ambassadors; Pre-AMSA (American Medical Student Association); Honors 101; Circle K; Campus Crusade for Christ; Phi Mu; Gamma Beta Phi; Alpha Tau Omega; Athletics, Staff and Recreational Sports.

The hard work and determination of these students to help out their neighbors in the Gulf region inspired Marshall Alumni, members of the Marshall University Foundation, Inc., the Board of Directors and others to rise to the challenge of "Bringing a Buck" and more. In one case, an anonymous donation of \$250,000 was made, inspiring other donors to give as much as \$25,000 each.

I applaud Student Body President Michael Misiti's challenge to other higher education institutions in the country to match Marshall's fundraising total. This sentiment was echoed by Governor Joe Manchin, who was at the game and issued his own challenge to the other 49 governors to work with their universities and colleges to sponsor a "Bring a Buck" event during upcoming football games.

This generous outpouring of support for the victims of Hurricane Katrina from West Virginians is not surprising. In fact, this is just the latest response by Marshall University as part of Thunder Relief 2005, a joint effort by students, faculty and staff in response to the devastation from the disaster in Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida.

From waiving all application and late fees for displaced students, to offering free online courses, to coordinating through the Marshall medical school with medical personnel in hurricane-stricken areas who need assistance, Marshall University has not hesitated in doing their part to help out their fellow Americans.

We in the Mountain State have had our share of devastating floods and are familiar with the needs of those most affected by this tragic disaster. I am proud of the generous spirit of humanity being shown by my fellow West Virginians and I am proud to call the Mountain State my home.

HONORING JAMES AND VIRGINIA LAWRENCE, 2005 ANGELS IN ADOPTION

HON. JIM COOPER

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 14, 2005

Mr. COOPER. Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure today to recognize and pay tribute to this year's Angels in Adoption award-ees from the Fifth District of Tennessee—James and Virginia Lawrence. This honor is given by the Congressional Coalition in Adoption to extraordinary individuals, like the Lawrences, who have made a tremendous difference in the lives of foster children.